



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission United States Fish and Wildlife Service



Historic Agreement to Be Celebrated

NISQUALLY (February 17, 2005) – The Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge will celebrate a new cooperative agreement that will pave the way for conservation and recreation in the watershed. Under the agreement, the tribe and the Refuge will cooperatively manage about 310 acres of tribally owned land on the east bank of the Nisqually River as part of the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.

“This agreement balances public access with protection of the Nisqually River estuary,” said David Troutt, natural resources director for the Nisqually Tribe. “With the Refuge and the tribe working together to manage the tribally-owned land, it guarantees that the entire Nisqually River estuary will be protected as a whole.”

“The Refuge and the tribe will work together to ensure this land is always protected,” said Jean Takekawa, manager of the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. Dorian Sanchez, Nisqually tribal chairman, and Dave Allen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional director, will officially sign the agreement at the **Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge on Wednesday, February 23**. They and Congressman Norm Dicks will offer comments.

“Not only is this a significant event in the management of the Nisqually delta, but it is also a major advance in protecting the Nisqually River watershed,” said Takekawa. “This is also a great partnership between the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Refuge.” The cooperative agreement is the first formal arrangement between the tribe and refuge managers, who have a long-term working relationship.

The land under the agreement, a former cattle ranch, has been the site of an ongoing and aggressive estuary restoration effort by the tribe. To date, the Nisqually Tribe has restored almost 40 acres of estuary. An additional 100 acres will be opened next summer. “The Nisqually River estuary is the largest mostly undisturbed estuary in Puget Sound,” said Troutt. “The most important thing we can do to restore salmon in the Nisqually River is to protect and restore this estuary. This agreement helps us do that.”

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“The tribe’s goal when the property was purchased was to return it to its natural state,” said Troutt. Estuaries are where salmon undergo a vital physiological change that allows them to move from the freshwater to saltwater. In recent years, the tribe has discovered that migrating juvenile salmon from all over Puget Sound use the Nisqually estuary to feed and rear.

Increased public access will include a new trail along the east side of the Nisqually River. The process to approve and fund a bridge across Red Salmon Slough to connect the entire property through a loop trail is already under way. “Everyone will benefit from the stewardship outlined in this agreement,” said Troutt. “Salmon will continue to return to the Nisqually River and the public will be welcome to visit this special place.”

WHAT: Nisqually Tribe/Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Cooperative Agreement signing

WHEN: Wednesday, February 23
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center
100 Brown Farm Rd. Olympia, WA
(Take I-5 to Exit #114. Turn north and follow signs to refuge)

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For more information, contact: David Troutt, natural resources director, Nisqually Indian Tribe, (360) 438-8687. Jean Takekawa, Refuge Manager, Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, (360) 753-9467. Emmett O’Connell, South Sound information officer, NWIFC, (360) 528-4304, eoconnell@nwifc.org